

RESPONSES TO FINDINGS PRESENTED IN THE PARKS AND TRAILS ASSESSMENT REPORT

A summary of the consultants findings for each park, with some staff comments, are provided below.

Burlington Park (pages 7-11)

Consultant's overall condition assessment: Poor

Summary: Park was built in the 1970s. Equipment is outdated. Facility is not ADA accessible.

Consultant's Renovation Estimate: \$422,500

Staff Comment: We agree that the park is in poor condition. We have corrected all of the identified Life Safety issues. We believe that the best course would be to completely redesign the park and replace all of the older outdated equipment.

Cedar Falls Park (pages 13-19)

Consultant's overall condition assessment: Fair

Summary: Park was built in the 1970s. Equipment is outdated. Facility is not ADA accessible.

Consultant's Renovation Estimate: \$1,833,000

Staff Comment: We believe that the park is in worse condition than the consultant indicates. We have corrected all of the identified Life Safety issues. The only aspects of the park that are currently in good condition are the play area and ballfield lights, which were recently replaced. In order to correct code deficiencies and improve aesthetics a partial redesign of the park would be necessary. The tennis courts and picnic area should be relocated, the parking lot rebuilt, all paths rebuilt, and the restroom replaced. We recommend that the large grass turf field (Field #1) be replaced with an artificial turf for field sport use.

Hargraves Park (pages 21-25)

Consultant's overall condition assessment: Good

Summary: Park has had several renovations. Some ADA access issues remain.

Consultant's Renovation Estimate: \$947,000

Staff Comment: This facility has benefited from the use of payment in lieu of development fees and CDBG funds. A redesign is not necessary; however several park elements should be replaced or renovated including the ballfield, slopes, picnic areas, and parking lots. All Life Safety issues and some renovation items identified in the report have been addressed.

Oakwood Park (pages 27-29)

Consultant's overall condition assessment: Poor

Summary: The park was built in the 1970s and has not been renovated since. Play area is in poor condition. ADA accessibility is an issue through the park.

Consultant's Renovation Estimate: \$250,000

Staff Comment: Funds have been provided in the FY 2009-10 Capital Improvements Program to address some of the issues at the play area. We plan on correcting serious drainage problems at the play area. We will replace as much of the equipment as possible. Life Safety issues have been addressed. We think that the tennis court should be rebuilt due to poor subsurface conditions. The tennis court lights no longer function. The best use of the grass field should be determined.

Umstead Park (pages 31-37)

Consultant's overall condition assessment: Poor

Summary: The park was built in the 1960s and has not been renovated since. The play area and one picnic shelter are in the Bolin Creek floodway. Both are outdated. ADA accessibility is an issue through the park.

Consultant's Renovation Estimate: \$552,000

Staff Comment: We recommend that Umstead Park be redesigned with the twin goals of replacing all outdated equipment and moving facilities out of the areas that flood on a fairly frequent basis. We think that the cost of such a redesign and replacement would be significantly higher than the consultant's renovation cost estimate.

Of special note is the children's play area. The play equipment at Umstead Park is the Town's only completely handicap accessible structure. The structure was built in the early 1980s and is now outdated. We recommend that we find a new location, out of the floodway and floodplain, for a structure that can be 100% accessible for wheelchair bound users. The costs for an accessible structure are much higher than a standard structure because of the large number of ramps required as well as specialized play stations.

Bolin Creek Greenway (pages 39-41)

Consultant's overall condition assessment: Fair

Summary: The consultant noted issues related to pavement, vegetation management, and drainage.

Consultant's Renovation Estimate: \$696,000

Staff Comment: We addressed several of the consultant's concerns related to vegetation and pavement. The non-profit Friends of Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation is currently funding a more detailed study of the Bolin Creek Trail to determine what actions should be taken. Some funding opportunities for improvements may be available through the Friends.

Other Parks and Trails (pages 43-59)

The consultant conducted brief reviews of Meadowmont, Ephesus, Community Center, North Forest Hills, Homestead, and Westwood Parks. In addition they reviewed all official Town trails. Cost estimates and detailed recommendations were not developed. However general priorities and recommendations for each facility are included in the report. In all cases the consultant noted Life Safety, Code, Maintenance, and Aesthetic issues.

Staff Comment: We have addressed the Life Safety issues and many of the routine maintenance issues noted in the report. However, many potentially expensive renovation projects were identified.

System Recommendations: Beginning on page 61, the consultant has presented a list of recommendations to address the issues related to park deficiencies. These recommendations range from long term goals such as developing new master plans for some parks to identification of immediate maintenance needs to address Life Safety Issues.

Overall System Recommendations

The consultant recommends that the Town take a number of steps to address the condition of our park system. These steps can be found on page 62 of the report. Although all of the recommendations are important, we think that the following are key to improving our park system:

1. Complete temporary modifications
2. Develop a funding plan to complete restorations and renovations
3. Create new master plans for select parks

Phasing Recommendations

The consultant suggests several methods of phasing improvements. These can be found on pages 65-69.

Maintenance Recommendations: The consultant studied the Town's current organization structure as it relates to park and trail maintenance. This evaluation begins on page 73 of the report. The consultant found that the Town spends \$41.50 per capita on landscape services, while the average amount spent for similar services in the Piedmont region of North Carolina is \$83.08 per capita. The consultant recommends that the Town take the following actions:

- Develop an annual maintenance plan
- Develop a parks maintenance manual and related training
- Implement a safety and user response program
- Increase funding for maintenance

Initial Response to Consultant's Recommendations: We have reviewed the document and agree with its major findings and recommendations. We have taken the following steps to immediately address some of the issues raised by the consultant:

1. Life Safety Deficiencies – The consultant defines Life Safety as “Issues related to public safety”. In practice Life Safety deficiencies range from clear, identifiable hazards to more general issues such as older playground equipment that no longer meets the most current version of national safety standards. We have corrected or are currently addressing 24 of the 30 Life Safety deficiencies identified in the report, including those that we think represented the greatest safety issues. Most of the remaining projects would require funding sources that have not been identified as of this time. The major items remaining are:
 - Replacement of a bridge at Burlington Park. We are in the process of closing one of the two bridges mentioned in the report. We believe the remaining bridge will function safely for some time. We intend to replace the bridge as soon as funds are available.

- Installation of a retaining wall at Hargraves Park between the gymnasium and pool. This is a major project that will require design services and significant funding.
 - Renovation of walkways and a retaining wall at Cedar Falls Park. Some work has already been accomplished. This is a major project that will require design services and significant funding.
 - Replacement of playgrounds. We are currently working on a project to replace the playground at Oakwood Park. Playgrounds that should be replaced include the structures at Burlington, Umstead, and Westwood Parks. If funding is available we intend to replace one play area per year.
 - Replacement of the timber steps adjacent to the Hargraves ballfield. These steps are in the process of being removed.
 - Removal of downed, dead, and damaged trees along Bolin Creek Trail. This work is currently underway.
2. Landscape Division Reorganization – The Landscape Division has been reorganized to better manage resources and limit travel time between destinations by moving from a zone strategy to a geographic based strategy. We have also started to contract out more routine items such as grass cutting in order to allow existing staff to manage other responsibilities. Separate cemetery and ballfield crews have been organized to increase service levels.
 3. Maintenance Management Plans – We are in the process of developing plans. The first plans should be available by January 2010.
 4. We will continue to address identified deficiencies using all financial sources at our disposal.